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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1131
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2272
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9294
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7549
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5378
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3707
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5303
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0164
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0137
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4425
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9855
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7144
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0159
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0006
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000040

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/19/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: ELECTIONS UPDATE NO. 9

REF: A. COLOMBO 36

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 27

[1](#)C. COLOMBO 21

[1](#)D. COLOMBO 11

[1](#)E. COLOMBO 7

[1](#)F. COLOMBO 2

[1](#)G. 09 COLOMBO 1152

[1](#)H. 09 COLOMBO 1145

[1](#)I. 09 COLOMBO 1139

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

CONTINUING VIOLENCE

[1](#)1. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Two persons were reported shot and seriously injured the night of January 18 while returning home from a Fonseka campaign rally in a small town near Hambantota. Numerous Post contacts have expressed concern about increasing violence in the remaining days before the election, as well in the day or days following the election, depending on the outcome. Conjecture ranges from isolated acts of retribution to widespread unrest in the streets if the opposition -- particularly the violence-prone JVP -- believed the government stole the election or, alternatively, Fonseka won outright and pro-government forces went on an angry rampage.

MEDIA COMPETENT AUTHORITY RECALLED

[1](#)2. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) The Elections Commissioner has recalled the Competent Authority over the state media, saying that all his orders had been ignored. Opposition representatives pointed to this as evidence that the election would not be free and fair.

ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER SAYS HE

WILL RESIGN AFTER THIS ELECTION

¶3. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) The clearly embattled Elections Commissioner announced he would resign his position after the presidential elections. He told us he had had five heart attacks and attempted to resign several times, but President Rajapaksa insisted he stay on because those in line to succeed him were not Rajapaksa loyalists. This time, however, the Commissioner sounds determined to quit the job. With parliamentary elections due later this spring, his replacement could prove to be a key position in that vote.

SPECIAL POLICE TO MONITOR BALLOT COUNTING?

¶4. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) CAFFE, one of the local elections monitoring groups, told post it had received word that teams of "special police officers" would be deployed to monitor ballot counting centers. CAFFE gave the Embassy a copy of a letter it sent to the Elections Commissioner complaining of this alleged plan, stating that the regular police deployments would be sufficient. Other contacts told Post they worried that persons would switch ballot boxes while they were being transported to counting centers, saying this had occurred in past provincial council elections, in particular with boxes transported by boat or helicopter.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES WAGE HIKE

¶5. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) The Ministry of Labor Relations and Manpower announced that all wage boards in the

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private sector were ordered to grant a salary increase of USD 23 per month to all their employees, to match an earlier announcement of a similar raise for all public sector employees.

EXPECTATIONS OF POST-ELECTION CURFEW

¶6. (C)(Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Many local observers expected the government would impose a curfew after the election. The most likely scenario would be a curfew imposed the evening of the election after the polls close. It would likely last well into, or through, the next day and possibly into the following day, January 28. Post is making contingency plans to ensure adequate staffing for security and essential reporting purposes. We will send a warden message this week alerting the American community to take proper precautions.

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